United Nations A/61/PV.94

General Assembly
Sixty-first session

Official Records

94th plenary meeting
Monday, 16 April 2007, 4.30 p.m.
New York

President: Ms. Al Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 4.40 p.m.

Agenda item 122 (continued)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/61/709/Add.4)

The President: Before turning to the item on our agenda, I should like to inform members that, since the issuance of documents A/61/709 and Addenda 1 to 3, Saint Lucia has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

The President: This information will be reflected in document A/61/709/Add.4, to be issued tomorrow morning.

Agenda item 113 (continued)

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/836)

The President: It gives me great pleasure to welcome members to the General Assembly today to discuss the important issue of the coherence and effectiveness of the United Nations operational activities.

On 5 April, I received a letter from the Secretary-General conveying his report on the recommendations of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence (A/61/836). Before the Secretary-General introduces his report, I would like to offer a few remarks.

All Member States have an interest in a more effective United Nations — a United Nations that can better deliver on its promises to the world. The promise to achieve the Millennium Development Goals is central to delivering our broader development agenda. It is part of our collective duty not only to ensure global economic stability and prosperity, but also to guarantee that we live in a fair, just and safe global community. But as we approach the halfway point to 2015, I think we can all agree that urgent action is needed.

The United Nations, more than any other body, is uniquely placed to take a leading role in achieving those goals, but in order to do so, and like any other organization, it must strengthen itself to make sure that it is equipped to respond to new global challenges.

The report of the High-level Panel on the system-wide coherence of the United Nations operational activities presents us with an important opportunity to do so. Since it was received by Member States on 9 November 2006, I know that there has been much informal discussion of the report and its recommendations. I have also had the opportunity to talk to many Member States about their views.

What has struck me is that donor countries and developing countries alike agree that the United

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Nations system has a critical role to play in development; that the United Nations must remain at the heart of the multilateral development system; that the United Nations development activities need to be strengthened; and that the United Nations can deliver more and better development assistance.

In his report, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has expressed his broad support for the recommendations in the Panel's report. The Secretary-General also emphasizes the need to take urgent steps to enhance the overall coherence and effectiveness of the United Nations operational activities.

Nationally owned pilot schemes are already under way to test the "One country" approach. The outcome of those pilots will be an essential element for the intergovernmental consultations on the operational effectiveness of the United Nations.

At the recent informal thematic debate on gender equality and the empowerment of women, many Member States highlighted the global importance of that issue. They also expressed strong support for a more coherent, better coordinated and better resourced United Nations gender architecture to strengthen the impact of gender equality and the empowerment of women at the country level.

It is my hope that, through the consultation process on the Secretary-General's report, that desire for action can be translated into results that have a positive impact for women. In order to move forward, the constructive and collective effort of the United Nations system and of Member States will be necessary.

Being strong on development is a core strategic objective of the United Nations. It is an objective common to all Member States and to the funds, programmes and agencies involved in operational activities at the country level. The report invites us to deal with challenging issues, such as the finance and governance of United Nations activities. I look forward to the in-depth intergovernmental consultations on those issues. We need to deal with those and other issues with the common objective of strengthening the United Nations.

I therefore appeal to all Members to offer their views and suggestions on the substantive issues that we must discuss and on the process to move that agenda forward. Based on their views and on the consultations that I will shortly conduct, I am hopeful that I can outline a process for considering all the issues before us that require Members' collective support.

We have an important and timely opportunity to build on our shared objective to strengthen the United Nations system so that it remains at the heart of the multilateral development system and so that it is fit to deliver on the goals that we cannot afford to miss. I therefore appeal to all Members not to shy away from dealing with the issues at hand and to work together to build broad consensus on how to address them.

I now give the floor to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to introduce his report.

The Secretary-General: I am honoured and grateful for this opportunity to present my report on the recommendations put forward by the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and environment.

As members know, the Panel was commissioned by my predecessor, Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in response to a mandate stemming from the 2005 World Summit. The reasoning behind it is well known. It is widely agreed that the United Nations could perform far better in delivering on its vision and mission in the areas concerned. The Organization is seen as fragmented and weak at the country level, where more than a third of United Nations country teams now include 10 or more United Nations agencies, funds and programmes on the ground at any one time. And it is seen as lacking in synergy at the global level, where, in some sectors, up to 20 United Nations entities can compete for limited resources without a clear collaborative framework.

I believe that the report of the Panel has produced thought-provoking and far-reaching proposals to address those shortcomings. The recommendations merit our full engagement. In assessing the proposals, I have benefited greatly from informal but extensive consultations with Member States. The dialogue has been frank and productive. It has strengthened our determination to bring together the United Nations system's many assets to deliver as one. It has brought home to us our duty to become more responsive to the needs of countries, communities and people everywhere, and it has helped build an understanding of the need to build on common ground, balancing the interests of all Member States.

I have grounded my assessment in the rationale for change put forward by the Panel. At the same time, I have weighed carefully the views I have heard over the past months from a wide range of Member States, individually and in groupings, as well as other stakeholders within and outside the United Nations system. I have also studied the initial appraisal of the Panel's report put forward by my predecessor.

In exploring a way forward for intergovernmental review, I am convinced that we need to place the Panel's recommendations firmly within the context of the wider United Nations reform agenda. That will allow us to take full advantage of existing processes. At the same time, we need to balance the momentum towards change with respect for intergovernmental consideration.

Today, as the General Assembly embarks on formal consideration of the Panel's recommendations, I am here to express my broad support for the principle of a stronger, more coherent United Nations and for the recommendations contained in the Panel's report. I profoundly agree with the Panel's emphasis on efficiency, transparency and accountability. Those are at the heart of Member States' demands for United Nations reform and form a cornerstone of my own priorities for the Organization.

Allow me to briefly highlight a few of the elements that I have addressed in the report before the Assembly.

On the Panel's recommendations for coherence, effectiveness and efficiency at the country level, I have outlined the steps taken to initiate voluntary pilots in eight countries testing the approach of "One United Nations". The Panel initially recommended five pilots, but as a result of interest in recipient countries, there are now eight. To ensure the success of that process, we need to work together, all parts of the United Nations system as well as Member States, so that any lessons learned can be incorporated into further efforts.

I have also described progress on the recommendation that the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) review its functions. The aim here would be to transform the CEB into a more effective and transparent mechanism for high-level coordination and consultation. When I chair my first CEB session this weekend, executive heads will consider a preliminary set of proposals to strengthen the body's effectiveness and relevance. Another essential driver will be the agenda for harmonizing business practices, as advocated by the Panel.

On gender, my report makes clear my support for replacing several current structures with one dynamic United Nations entity, focused on gender equality and women's empowerment. Such an entity should mobilize forces of change at the global level and inspire enhanced results at the country level. I am committed to taking that recommendation forward, in accordance with the decisions of Member States.

On governance, I believe that the Panel's recommendations warrant in-depth intergovernmental review. The proposals constitute an important starting point, but they require further deliberation and discussion to develop full ownership of a common vision. That applies particularly to the proposals for strengthening the Economic and Social Council. We should bear in mind the reform process which the Council has already undergone and the need to follow it through.

I have asked the Deputy Secretary-General to manage and oversee the system-wide coherence agenda. She will ensure that the United Nations system's initiatives to act on the Panel's recommendations are guided by, respectful of and closely coordinated with the intergovernmental consideration of the Panel's report.

Let us agree that moving forward on system-wide coherence is not in the interests of any one group of countries or against those of another. It is a win-win-win solution and vision. It is a win for developing countries, which stand to gain more coherent assistance and better service delivery. It is a win for developed countries, which will be able to explain and justify to their constituents why it is right to channel resources through the United Nations and demonstrate real results. It is a win for the United Nations, for all the above reasons, and because we will be putting our house in better and enduring order.

And lest we forget, how we improve the ability of the United Nations to deliver in development, humanitarian assistance and the environment is something in which we all have a wider stake. It is a matter of life and death to millions of men, women and children around the world who depend on us to meet their basic human needs — today and for generations to come.

I thank Members again for giving me this valuable opportunity to speak to them. Not least, Madam, I am grateful for your personal contribution in carrying forward the consultations. In the months ahead, I look forward to working closely with Member States and intergovernmental bodies. Let us move ahead together in our common vision for a more coherent United Nations system, capable of delivering as one to meet Members' needs and expectations.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan, who will speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): The Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement welcome the submission of the Secretary-General's report in document A/61/836 on the recommendations of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence. The preliminary views of both groups on the High-level Panel's report were conveyed in a letter addressed to the Secretary-General by the chairs of the two groups on 19 March 2007.

We appreciate the fact that the Secretary-General's report has responded to some of the views conveyed in our letter. We reaffirm the contents of our letter, a copy of which will be circulated, along with a copy of this statement. Our views in greater detail on the substantive aspects of the report and on the process will be expressed in the forthcoming consultations.

The Joint Coordinating Committee (JCC) of the Group of 77 and the Non-Aligned Movement looks forward to hearing the views of other delegations on the recommendations of the High-level Panel's report and the report of the Secretary-General, as well as on the process of consultations to consider their recommendations.

On behalf of the JCC, I address this Assembly to recall and reaffirm that economic and social development should remain the centrepiece of the deliberations at the United Nations and that the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, should continue to be the overarching framework of the United Nations development activities. We further emphasize the need for a strengthened global partnership for development, based on the recognition of national leadership and ownership of national strategies.

The JCC would like to reiterate its position that development cooperation should be demand-driven and pursued on the basis of the national strategies and plans of developing countries. The JCC has always emphasized that United Nations development cooperation should be voluntary and of a grant-based nature, and that there should be no one-size-fits-all approach. The nature of development cooperation should be responsive to the specific needs, priorities and conditions of each country. The JCC would not support the introduction of new conditionalities through the reform process.

The JCC recalls General Assembly resolution 59/250, which remains the intergovernmentally agreed guiding policy framework for addressing the United Nations operational activities for development. It is relevant that the resolution stresses that reform efforts should enhance organizational efficiency and achieve concrete development results, and that the value of United Nations operational activities for development should be assessed on the basis of their impact on the recipient countries.

The JCC believes that reforms of the United Nations operational activities for development should be aimed at ensuring both efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of assistance. It should not be merely a cost-cutting exercise. It cannot be denied that the most important component of operational activities for development is an expanding and adequate source of funding based on development assistance from the United Nations system and other sources that are responsive to the national development plans and programmes of countries. The JCC expects that all those issues will be included as important elements of the overall discussion.

We agree with the Secretary-General that the High-level Panel's report "merits a process of review and dialogue to build broadbased common understanding of its objectives, contents and proposals" (*A/61/836, para. 8*). We trust that you, Madam, will agree to lead the process for the consideration of the High-level Panel's report and the Secretary-General's comments thereon. We will participate actively and constructively in that process. Let me stress once again what was stated in the joint letter of the Group of 77 and the Non-Aligned Movement: the implementation of recommendations contained in the report should follow

intergovernmental consideration and agreement by the General Assembly.

Finally, we wish to emphasize that the High-level Panel's report should be considered with care and due deliberation. There should be no rush to take decisions against artificial deadlines. The process to consider the recommendations should be open, transparent and inclusive. We look forward to further consultations on identifying the best way to consider and decide on the recommendations of the report.

Ms. Wieczorek-Zeul (Germany): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and the European Free Trade Association country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this declaration.

The EU thanks the Secretary-General for sharing his views and suggestions on the report of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence with the Member States. We are grateful for his leadership. I listened attentively and thank him very much for the leadership he is showing. The EU also thanks the President of the General Assembly for opening the debate on the High-level Panel's report. We are looking forward to working with her, the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General most constructively. I would also say that, in their desire to move the gender question forward, they have all our support.

The EU sees the United Nations system of operational activities as unique in that its mandate includes poverty eradication, sustainable development, conflict prevention, post-conflict rehabilitation and peacebuilding. The United Nations special advantage is its universal membership and political independence and stature.

The reform process of the United Nations development cooperation has always been an important issue for the EU. Achieving the Millennium Development Goals will depend on an even more effective and efficient United Nations. We are precisely in the middle of the timetable to reach the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, and so we need an efficient and effective United Nations development structure.

That is true in particular at the country level. It is important to bring together the United Nations normative, analytic and operational expertise at the country level in order to generate additional benefits for the United Nations partner countries. The EU therefore concurs with the Panel's vision of delivering as one.

The EU welcomes the establishment of the "One United Nations" country pilots, which we hope will show all of us the potential of that new approach. I completely agree with what has been said to the effect that the "One Country" programmes will have to derive from the needs and priorities of the partner countries and strengthen country ownership.

The EU considers the issue of funding for the operational activities of the United Nations to be a key question of which Member States must remain seized. The objective must be to ensure multi-year, adequate, predictable and timely core funding. Improving the balance between core and non-core resources should strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations at the country level. It was very interesting during the debate in preparation of the Panel's report to see how few resources were given to core financing. That is a situation that we will have to change.

The European Union underlines the importance of strengthening the United Nations gender architecture, with a view to both normative and operational concerns. We agree with the Panel that the commitment to gender equality should remain a mandate of the entire United Nations system. Gender equality and the empowerment of women — including in economic terms — are not only important cross-cutting issues, but are key to fighting poverty and HIV/AIDS and to bringing social welfare and welfare to individual countries and to the whole world.

The EU agrees with the Panel that human rights should also be an integral part of the programme activities of the United Nations.

The environmental activities of the United Nations and the system of international environmental governance need to be strengthened further. Environmental considerations must also be better integrated into the operational activities of the United

Nations in the field. We welcome the Panel's call for further coordination among the relevant United Nations agencies in the field of the environment and for the upgrading of the United Nations Environment Programme. Clearly, the fight against climate change mandates such an upgrade.

The leading role of the United Nations in the coordination of humanitarian assistance and its substantive contributions to implementing it must, as the Secretary-General has said, be further enhanced. The EU is committed to further support of this reform process and to its financing.

The EU considers it important to engage all States Members of the United Nations and other stakeholders in an open and constructive discussion of the report's recommendations. In this context, we agree with the Secretary-General that the proposals of the report should be considered and taken forward within ongoing reform processes to the extent possible. For practical reasons, we suggest proceeding on thematic tracks.

We are looking forward to constructive discussions with all Member States on the Panel's recommendations in order to improve the ability of the United Nations to assist countries in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals. In an ever-changing world, a world that changes very quickly, we of course need time to discuss the issues. But we also need time to take decisions. We need strong structures, and if we do not create the structures, others will do so for us. The market itself will not be able to do so.

Ms. Girardin (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to thank the President of the General Assembly for having organized this debate which, I hope, will be a starting point for fruitful discussions on how to make the operational activities of the United Nations more effective.

We are well aware of the situation. There is a great fragmentation of actions conducted by the Organization, with many actors often competing to attract limited and rather unpredictable resources. The developing countries are the first to suffer from these deficiencies, being faced with interlocutors lacking in the means to help them to meet the challenges they face, including pursuing the Millennium Development Goals. Can we possibly be satisfied with this situation?

France is convinced that, because it is a stronghold of legitimacy, because among its purposes is to ensure a synthesis among issues of peace, security and development, because it combines standards-setting functions with concrete action in the field, the United Nations has an essential role to play in responding to global challenges and in promoting development. The urgent nature of these challenges, however, requires results. It is therefore up to us to put our Organization in working order. And, for all of us, this must be a true collective ambition.

The High-level Panel has submitted a set of coherent recommendations aimed at making the Organization deliver as one in its actions. France endorses this goal of unity, which in no way contradicts preserving the contributions of the various agencies, funds and programmes, which we are all committed to doing.

In the field, it is specifically suggested that we go from a system based on supply to a more strategic approach where the partner country will say what it expects from the United Nations in support of priorities that it will define itself and by means of more predictable resources. That is the meaning of the concept of one programme, one leader, one budget and one office, as set forth by the Panel. This reform, which will allow us to establish the principle of appropriation, will clearly require major adaptation endeavours, including by donors. In full sovereignty, eight countries have volunteered to try out these new modalities. We give them our support and are convinced that all Member States will learn from their experiences, whose diversity will clearly show that the proposed reform is not aimed at imposing uniform rules on everyone, but rather to respond to everyone's needs.

In the area of the environment, Mr. Secretary-General, you yourself emphasized at the opening of the Citizens of the Earth conference, held in Paris on 2 and 3 February, how much the international community needs a more coherent system of international governance. Upgrading the United Nations Environment Programme, as recommended by the Panel, corresponds to France's wish to give the United Nations a strong environmental pillar; a United Nations environment organization with sufficient authority to coordinate the action necessary to preserve our planet for future generations. The diagnosis is known, and the time for evaluations is behind us. The time has come

for us to act and, following a process of consultation in the General Assembly, to take the decisions which will allow us, in this area as well, to make the United Nations able to better serve its Member States.

On humanitarian issues, the Panel properly emphasized the importance of strengthening coordination among all actors to better deal with the transition from emergency to development and to enhance prevention and early warning capacity.

Finally, the establishment of a specific entity for gender equality, headed by an Under-Secretary-General, is certainly part of the strong recommendations of the Panel. France is in favour of this, while being aware that this cross-cutting theme continues to be at the heart of the concerns of the operational agencies, which must systematically integrate it into all their activities. We are convinced that the intergovernmental discussions will take into account the irreplaceable contribution of such important actors as the United Nations Population Fund and UNICEF for the advancement of women's rights and the improvement of their status. In that respect, the new entity's functions will have to be harmonized with operational activities in the field.

Many of the recommendations of the Panel are in keeping with the reform under way, which Member States already support. As the Secretary-General emphasizes in his report, logic and common sense require that we consider the proposed measures in the context of existing processes, in order that we might avoid being responsible, in our intergovernmental discussions, for any duplication. It is, for instance, indisputable that the triennial review of operational activities allows us to cover a lot of ground in the area of development. Likewise, with respect to the environment, there is only one process, namely the one that will enable the United Nations to meet the challenges facing the international community in that area. With respect to new topics, we are prepared to engage, along with you, Madam President, in a process of reflection on the modalities required to create the necessary conditions for our work to flow as smoothly and as productively as possible.

Finally, the stakes are such that we cannot risk failure. Strengthening the effectiveness of the operational activities of the United Nations is a prerequisite for our universal Organization, the champion of multilateralism, to retain its unique role in the service of development. Madam President, you may rest assured that France is resolved to make its contribution in that respect.

Mr. Nsengimana (Rwanda): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Eritrea; the One United Nations pilot countries Cape Verde, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania; and the major donor countries Belgium, Denmark and Sweden.

We welcome the recommendations of the High-level Panel. They provide the international community with a unique opportunity to improve the way in which the United Nations delivers and thereby to safeguard the central role of United Nations operational activities.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report and his recognition that the United Nations is not optimally configured. We agree that the United Nations needs greater coherence and synergy so it can perform as one and be more than the sum of its parts. Where the Four Ones are implemented, the United Nations is likely to deliver better on national priorities, have more leverage in relation to other development actors, and better contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It was on the basis of that understanding that Cape Verde, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania volunteered to be part of the first group of pilot countries.

We further welcome the Panel's recommendation to establish One United Nations pilot countries. The experience gained from such pilots will be very valuable to all of us in generating a common understanding of how to move forward with United Nations reform over the coming years. We encourage all United Nations agencies and other stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, to be active partners in that process.

The proposals made by the High-level Panel require all partners to rethink the way multilateral agencies are funded. We need to be better aligned and more responsive to national priorities, and to support comprehensive development programmes rather than projects. We urge donors to provide assistance to the unified budgetary framework of the pilot countries, either directly or through additional core contributions.

"Delivering as one" is not a cost-cutting exercise; rather, it is intended to promote flexibility, coherence and consolidation, as well as responsiveness to country

needs. It will address the current weak, fragmented and ineffective system of governance as well as the issue of unpredictable funding.

National ownership and leadership of the pilot countries and of the One United Nations in general is critical. The process must, in all of its phases — in its preparation, implementation and evaluation — be directed by national Governments.

We agree with the Secretary-General that most of the proposals of the High-level Panel could be dealt with in existing reform processes. Reforms should, where appropriate, be implemented at the national, regional and Headquarters levels. However, there is a need for further discussions on how to consider proposals that do not fit into reform processes that are already established.

Final assessment of One United Nations pilot countries should be premised on the real development impact in the pilot countries, rather than on abstract or intellectual considerations.

It is important to continue the informal intergovernmental debate to ensure that all Member States have a full understanding of the proposed reforms and their consequences. It is also important that any institutional reform should be established by means of a transparent process and assessed primarily on the basis of its added value for results at the country level.

We look forward to considering the idea of establishing mechanisms such as the Sustainable Development Board and the appointment of a Development Coordinator. We will seek further information and discussion on those recommendations.

We welcome the recommendation to establish an independent task force to eliminate duplication and look forward to receiving additional information on the composition of the task force and on whether it will be a one-time exercise or a continuous one.

We support the proposed reform of United Nations business practices, aimed at ensuring a more professional and efficient Organization. Harmonization of procedures, administrative structures and routines is not an end in itself but will clearly promote best practices and facilitate inter-agency collaboration. That, in turn, should lead to greater support for poverty eradication.

We welcome the recommendations on humanitarian assistance and emphasize the importance of stronger coordination and leadership, as well of full funding for the Central Emergency Response Fund.

The General Assembly has decided that sustainable development should be a key component of all United Nations activities. In that light, it is critical that ongoing informal consultations, in line with Panel recommendations, lead to tangible progress on reinforcing United Nations environmental activities and international environmental governance.

We agree that the United Nations should continue to reinforce the integration of human rights in all development activities. We very much welcome the Panel's recommendation to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to deliver on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Coordination with other multilateral agencies, particularly the Bretton Woods institutions, at the Headquarters and country levels is critical and should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Mr. McNee (Canada): I have the honour to speak on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand (CANZ).

The CANZ delegations welcome the Secretary-General's report (A/61/836) in response to the recommendations of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence. We are particularly pleased that the Secretary-General has made clear his broad support for the recommendations in the Panel's report (A/61/583) and has made practical and actionable proposals regarding the next steps in considering the Panel's recommendations.

The CANZ delegations agree with the Secretary-General's observation that the Panel's report is a major contribution to the wider United Nations reform agenda. The Panel's recommendations not only give added impetus to existing reform efforts, but also provide significant value added by proposing ways of reducing fragmentation and maximizing the impact of the work of the United Nations in development, humanitarian assistance and the environment, particularly at the country level, where it matters most.

Like the Secretary-General, we especially welcome the Panel's emphasis and concreteness with regard to making the United Nations system more results-based, efficient and accountable. The CANZ

delegations agree that the recommendations now deserve thorough and constructive consideration by all Member States. The CANZ delegations are considering their national positions on the recommendations, and we very much look forward to being active and constructive participants in these discussions.

We support the Secretary-General's proposed multi-track approach for taking the Panel's recommendations forward. This process should be flexible enough to avoid disagreements in some areas from holding up progress in others where consensus exists or should be possible. As the Secretary-General points out, many of the Panel's recommendations are consistent with existing mandates for reform and are indeed being addressed in a variety of intergovernmental and United Nations agency contexts. These include the General Assembly's discussions on international environmental governance, the triennial comprehensive policy review, continuing efforts to improve humanitarian response and the work by the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination. These efforts should continue.

In taking the process forward, it will be important to match decision-making with the relevant and appropriate United Nations bodies and individuals. For example, we believe that some recommendations fall under the authority of the Secretary-General. Others are within the purview of other senior executives across the United Nations system and, in particular, their coordination bodies. Some recommendations will necessarily require intergovernmental consideration and agreement.

We therefore support the differentiated approach suggested by the Secretary-General, all the while keeping an eye on the integrity of the Panel's recommendations as a coherent whole. We look forward to further advice from you, Madam President, on how to plan to take forward the intergovernmental process on the issues where this is required.

An important initiative to increase coherence and, therefore, delivery by the United Nations at a country level, is the eight country pilot projects. We greatly welcome the initiative of those countries that have volunteered to take some of the principles in the Panel report and put them into practice. We believe the lessons from the pilots will play an important part in informing other reform efforts. We shall follow the progress of the pilots closely and look forward to receiving the analysis and lessons learned from their experience. We believe the lessons from the pilots will play a part in informing other reform efforts, to ensure that better delivery at the country level is supported and enabled by coherent, effective processes and systems at the regional and Headquarters levels.

(*spoke in French*)

The United Nations must effectively promote and protect human rights. Central to this is gender equality and the empowerment of women. In this regard, one of the recommendations of the High-level Panel that we believe is important, and which the Secretary-General also highlights, is the need to strengthen the gender architecture of the United Nations. The CANZ delegations support the Panel's proposal for the creation of a new Under-Secretary-General post, which we believe goes hand-in-hand with the discussion on strengthening this gender architecture. We hope that this recommendation can be moved on quickly and that it will meet with broad support.

In conclusion, we are pleased that the Secretary-General has seized the opportunity presented by the High-level Panel's report to move the United Nations reform agenda forward. This is an opportunity for all Member States to engage in a well-informed discussion about improving the performance of the United Nations and its capacity to deliver concrete results in its critical mandates relating to development, humanitarian assistance, human rights and the environment. We hope that after this initial reaction to the Secretary-General's report and the Panel's recommendations, we can quickly move on a process and a time frame for taking our consultations forward in a structured way. We welcome the decision to delegate the Deputy Secretary-General to lead efforts on implementing the system-wide coherence agenda. We look forward with pleasure to working with her, with fellow Member States, the United Nations system and with you, Madam President, in carrying forward this important work.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): Madam President, the delegation of Japan is grateful to you for convening this meeting so promptly following the report of the Secretary-General on system-wide coherence (A/61/836). We thank the Secretary-General for the report and welcome it. My delegation agrees in general with the views expressed in the report and particularly welcomes the Secretary-General's proposal to move

ahead expeditiously with the main recommendations of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence.

On our success in that endeavour will depend how well the United Nations can meet the many challenges that it faces now and in the future, such as achieving the Millennium Development Goals, supporting peacebuilding, protecting the environment, defending human rights, promoting gender equality and providing humanitarian relief — not forgetting the formidable challenges posed by climate change and global warming.

We believe that Member States are now ready to commence intergovernmental discussion of the Panel's report in the General Assembly. Obviously, system-wide coherence within the United Nations is closely connected with the broader agenda of United Nations reform, and in this context I would like briefly to touch upon a few points at this stage, reserving a more detailed presentation of our views for later in our discussion.

First and foremost, time is of the essence. We are already at the halfway point in our drive to implement the Millennium Development Goals, and if we fail to take steps fast enough to improve the effectiveness of the Organization, we increase the risk of falling further short of our objectives. The recommendations of the Panel should not be regarded merely as proposals to be debated. Rather, we should aim at decisions and action for practical implementation as soon as is practicably possible.

Moreover, our discussion needs to be disciplined and structured so that we obtain the optimal results with due haste. Japan fully concurs with the Secretary-General that different proposals in the report should be addressed on their merits and that the report should be considered within the context of ongoing reform processes.

Secondly, I would like to reiterate that the ultimate objective of United Nations system-wide coherence should be to find the most effective means of delivering services to communities and people in need. In this regard, the report of the High-level Panel (A/61/583) identifies, quite appropriately, "national ownership and people-centred approaches" (*para. 12*) as one of the key guiding principles in our search for system-wide coherence in the areas of development, the environment and humanitarian work. This is particularly noteworthy, since, we believe, it confirms the importance of human security in our approach. The concept of human security was mentioned in the 2005 Summit Outcome Document, which states that "all individuals, in particular vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want" (*resolution 60/1, para. 143*). Our pursuit of system-wide coherence and our subsequent implementation of the recommendations of the Outcome Document must be influenced and driven by the concept of human security.

Thirdly, with regard to the One United Nations approach at the country level, we are pleased to note that the eight pilots have been initiated. We hope that that experiment will yield pertinent data and prove to be a valuable resource for further consideration. In this context, the Secretary-General calls attention to the authority of United Nations Resident Coordinators and the role of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), including the related idea of an internal firewall. We believe that it is important for UNDP to maintain neutrality in its management of the Resident Coordinator system and to respond to the needs of people in the field in a coherent manner.

Finally, as we study the recommendations of the High-level Panel and the report of the Secretary-General, we believe that greater emphasis should be given to climate change and global warming issues because of the seriousness and magnitude of the threats they pose and their implications for human security, as well as, potentially, for national security, in the short and the long term. The General Assembly should consider holding a focused debate on this issue and, perhaps, requesting the Secretary-General to make recommendations focused on how the United Nations system as a whole can respond to the global challenge posed by climate change more effectively and in a more coherent manner.

In conclusion, Member States must strive to translate as many of the Panel's recommendations as possible into concrete action, and sooner rather than later. To this end, Japan will participate constructively in the substantive discussions ahead.

Mrs. Asmady (Indonesia): My delegation would like to commend the Secretary-General for his comprehensive remarks and for his personal attention with regard to the recommendations contained in the report of the High-level Panel on United Nations

System-wide Coherence (A/61/583). The report is, indeed, timely as we continue to move forward with the United Nations reform process. My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement.

My delegation is heartened by the Secretary-General's approach, aimed at promoting a transparent and inclusive process rather than at taking the implementation of the Panel's recommendations for granted. While there is consensus on the need for reform, actual experiences on the ground have established guidelines for the approach that should be adopted.

Drawing on our experience during the tsunami in 2004, we can say that the United Nations responded promptly. However, weaknesses were exposed that underscore the critical importance of policy coherence and coordination among United Nations-related entities. Furthermore, there must also be enhanced coordination among United Nations agencies, the donor community, the Governments of affected countries, local people, non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector, as that is vital for effectiveness in the field.

Against that backdrop and in an attempt to ensure better understanding of the Panel's recommendations and their likely impact at the country, regional and global levels, the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Government of the Kingdom of Norway co-hosted Asia-Pacific regional high-level consultations on United Nations system-wide coherence in Jakarta on 29 and 30 March. At the meeting there was agreement that there was a need for a coherent and effective United Nations system.

In his opening remarks President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono underlined four fundamental principles that must influence the reform process. First of all, there must be predictable funding for all national programmes. Secondly, the administrative process of programme delivery must be simplified. Thirdly, United Nations programmes must be aligned with national programmes. Fourthly, there must be national ownership of United Nations programmes at the country level.

While Indonesia strongly supports the United Nations reform process, we wish to emphasize that the process must not diminish the character of United Nations operations. They must remain universal, voluntary and multilateral in character and scope, and they must respond to the specific, clearly articulated needs of recipient countries. We hope that coherence, effectiveness and efficiency within the United Nations system will contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals.

We also wish to stress that the One United Nations approach must take into account national conditions and priorities. It must be voluntarily embraced by national Governments. Equally important, there must be a review of operational experiences in order to take note of valuable lessons, rather than merely focusing on meeting targets as set out in the report. Lessons learned could be shared by the pilot countries and benefit others in the future.

For Indonesia, the immediate need is to deal with the logistical requirements of the reform process. Aware of the complexities of a total of 28 United Nations agencies operating in Indonesia, the Government is seriously considering adopting a national system of a One United Nations House to enhance coherence and coordination of fieldwork. By taking that step, we could tremendously enhance our development partnership with the United Nations.

Finally, my delegation believes that our deliberations today are the first step in a lengthy intergovernmental process. We wish to assure the Assembly that Indonesia stands ready to contribute to the next phase of the reform process. We are fully prepared to come together with other Member States and the Secretary-General to intensify the momentum for positive change.

Mr. Chulkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): As have previous speakers, the Russian delegation would first like to thank you, Madam President, for organizing the meeting today to discuss the recommendations of the report of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence (A/61/583) and also to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the preparation and presentation of his report on the recommendations of the Panel (A/61/836).

We are happy that many of the provisions of the Secretary-General's report are in line with our own approaches. First of all, there is the recognition of the

importance of intergovernmental consideration of the recommendations of the Panel and of taking into account the context of reform processes that are already underway in the United Nations, namely, the triennial comprehensive policy review, international environmental governance and discussions on humanitarian issues in the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

We welcome the commencement of the process of intergovernmental discussions of the Panel's report, which alone may result in the decisions to implement particular recommendations.

Because we share the general thrust of the Panel's report and support the desire to improve coherence in the operational, humanitarian, and environmental activities of the United Nations, we believe that some of the recommendations are useful and deserve serious and comprehensive consideration. However, we do not view the report as a sort of package. In our view, its recommendations should be considered separately and on the basis of their own merits. In that connection, the organization of our work process acquires special significance, and we would be very grateful to you, Madam President, for possible suggestions on the matter.

We would like to say a few words on the substance of the recommendations. We believe that General Assembly resolution 59/250 on the triennial comprehensive policy review remains the policy framework for reform in the field of operational activities. We confirm our full support for the fundamental principles of United Nations development assistance — its universality, voluntary nature, neutrality and grant-based nature.

From our point of view, the main criterion to assess the measures to improve the coherence of the work of any organization should be whether and to what extent those measures will help United Nations agencies to better and more effectively fulfil their mandates in providing assistance to countries.

The idea to implement One United Nations at the country level is interesting. However, it is already evident that such an approach is not able to solve all the existing problems. Moreover, it raises additional questions, including, for example, coordination with the Bretton Woods institutions. The pooling of agencies' resources and result-based budgeting also require further consideration.

Apart from that, we do not have any evaluation of the effectiveness of the implementation of any One Country Programmes. The report of the Secretary-General mentions that an evaluation will be carried out before the end of the current year. That timeframe does not look realistic to us in terms of allowing an evaluation of the results of programmes that are still in the process of being launched.

We agree that the application of this form of cooperation with the United Nations should be strictly voluntary. Each country should have the right to independently choose its forms of cooperation with the United Nations — either through a One Country Programme or in accordance with the current modalities.

We share the concerns of a number of countries with regard to the linkage of operational activities for development with the issues of human rights and gender, which in our view may lead to the politicization of the operational activities of the United Nations and would mean that it loses one of its main advantages. Apart from that, any technical assistance in the field of human rights may be provided only at the request of, and upon relevant application from, the beneficiary States.

It is also obvious to us that the main forums on human rights in the United Nations system, including with regard to standard-setting, are the Human Rights Council and the Third Committee of the General Assembly. The main function of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights as a Secretariat entity consists in servicing those intergovernmental organs.

The Panel's proposal to streamline various gender institutions of the United Nations through their unification deserves our attention and detailed consideration. It is obvious to us that in any case it is important to preserve the current division of labour between the Secretariat and Member States, in particular in respect of standard-setting and accountability. The function of standard-setting should remain with the States, to whom the Secretariat must be accountable. Any inversions are simply unacceptable.

As far as the Panel's institutional proposals are concerned, we believe that the optimal solution would be not to create new bodies or institutions, but a more rational and effective use of those that already exist. Regrettably, we could not find in the Panel report

adequate justification for the establishment of either the L-27 or the Sustainable Development Board. Similarly, we are not convinced of the utility of the Panel's proposals such as the establishment of an independent task force to eliminate duplication and the launch of an independent and authoritative assessment of the current United Nations system of international environmental governance.

In conclusion, Madame President, allow me to assure you of the positive and constructive attitude of the Russian delegation and express our confidence that the negotiating process that is being launched today under your leadership will be a success and will lead us to results that will be acceptable to all Member States.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom fully aligns itself with the statement made earlier by Germany on behalf of the European Union (EU).

This is a unique opportunity to match the vision contained in the Millennium Development Goals framework with a world-class United Nations delivery system. In our view, we need to seize the moment.

For us, this report is a win-win-win. I say that because I think it is a win for the developing countries. They are looking not just for more aid; they are looking for better aid, and this report is a prospect for that. It is a win for the United Nations system, including its staff, as we achieve a greater ability to deliver what is needed on the ground efficiently and quickly. And it is a win for the Member States as they wrestle with the twenty-first century agenda — poverty elimination, climate change and so on — because what donors want is a more efficient delivery system. That is of vital importance, as aid budgets are increasing. As Governments like my own are looking for opportunities to channel more aid through the United Nations, they need to be confident that that actually will happen. In my view, this Panel report will open the way for more money to be available through the United Nations, to the advantage of all. That is why, collectively, success will be a success for the United Nations, and the reverse will also be true. If we do not succeed, we will make it less likely that what we want to see happening multilaterally through the United Nations will occur.

The whole international development system must change together to meet the challenges we confront. We believe that the Panel report provides a solid platform for the United Nations to get ahead of the game. We can lose this report, or we can use it. Let us not lose it by debating whether change is needed. The analysis of the Panel is confirmed by the Paris Declaration. Its baseline survey results showed that the United Nations performed relatively poorly. Let us now try to use the Panel report to agree how and when necessary change can be delivered.

I know that a lot has been said about conditionality. Let me clear as far as we are concerned. One United Nations, at the country level, is about putting good Governments in the driver's seat in deciding how external assistance can best support their national priorities, with better accountability for results. It is an open door to new partnership and trust. As a donor, the United Kingdom is committed to long-term partnerships. For example, our 10-year country investment plans in Mozambique, Rwanda, Ghana and Sierra Leone bear testimony to that. Commitments like this from donors such as the United Kingdom are not about conditionality; they are about trust. That is why today the United Kingdom is the second largest donor to the United Nations system, on the basis that we trust what we get and we believe that more should be forthcoming. But it will be forthcoming only if we are prepared to seize the opportunities in this report and move forward in a way in which, day in and day out, developing countries are demonstrating that it is what they want. That is the significance of the pilot projects, and I think that, as they come to fruition, they will demonstrate why this is the way forward.

Let me give one last example as to why it is important. There are too many countries that do not profit from bilateral donors. They are the orphans of the multilateral system. Better governance and more direction will ensure that countries that are currently deprived bilaterally can actually get multilateral assistance.

That is why we very much hope that this debate is the start of a process which will lead quickly to substantial improvements, especially, if I may say so, on the pilot projects and on the gender issues, and then will move forward to implement those and the other parts of this Panel report, in order to respond to the wishes of developing countries. Again, let me repeat: we see this as a win-win-win.

Mr. Sen (India): We thank the Secretary-General for his report on the recommendations of the High-

level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence (A/61/836) and you, Madam President, for having initiated this intergovernmental process, giving us the opportunity to comment mainly on the process of consideration of the report's recommendations but also briefly on the substance. We broadly associate ourselves with the joint statement on behalf of the Group of 77 (G-77) and the Non-Aligned Movement, delivered by the Chair of the G-77.

The report of the High-level Panel (A/61/583) covers a broad spectrum of issues which include the functioning of the United Nations funds and programmes at the country level, their governance structure, the funding arrangements, the business practices that they employ, the relationship with the Bretton Woods institutions, strengthening of the United Nations gender architecture, and a host of other issues.

The contents of the High-level Panel report are complex and technical. Many of its recommendations provide guidance that can only serve as pointers to the directions recommended by the Panel. There is often a lack of clarity and detail on the precise operationalization of the recommendations. The Panel has obviously left the details to the Secretariat.

The report of the Secretary-General provides his views and recommendations on some of the elements covered by the Panel's report. However, information on the operational aspects of specific recommendations of the Panel is not available, even in this report. It is a telling comment that almost five months after the release of the Panel's report, in November last year, the Secretariat is struggling with the operational details. That should give us a fair idea of the time that the United Nations development system would need to invest in implementing the Panel's recommendations. It seems to us a strange preoccupation at the halfway mark for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Secretary-General, in paragraph 8 of his report, acknowledges the need for "a process of review and dialogue to build broad-based common understanding of its objectives, contents and proposals". We agree with the Secretary-General that there is much in the Panel's report that needs the development of "common understanding". A good example is the "One United Nations" approach itself.

In paragraph 12 of his report, the Secretary-General provides some information on how the "One United Nations" approach will be tested. He states that:

> "This exercise will provide an essential test of the application of the principles advocated by the Panel in different countries, and an analysis of the results and experiences will be presented to the relevant governing bodies at the end of the year."

As the reports on the eight pilots would become available only by the end of the year, we are unable to understand how we are expected to pronounce on the Panel's recommendations even before the results of those pilots have been made available. Perhaps the logical way to consider this report would be to await the results of the pilots before consideration of the report as a whole is begun.

At the beginning of his report, in paragraph 9, the Secretary-General recommends that

> "the proposals in the report should be pursued as an integrated and coherent whole, as the report was crafted as such with many of the recommendations connected to one another."

We agree entirely that the contents of the report cannot be split up for consideration in different parts of the United Nations. An integrated and coherent approach is the only option. After all, the approach to system-wide coherence cannot be incoherent. This, however, does not imply that the recommendations of the Panel come as a package. We believe that it is during the intergovernmental consideration of the recommendations that Member States will decide on the Panel's recommendations that merit further consideration and implementation.

A better-performing United Nations development system is first and foremost in the interest of developing countries. It is the developing countries which, as programme countries, are the recipients of the United Nations operational activities for development. We are convinced that the reform of the United Nations should be aimed at making the system more responsive to the needs of developing countries through the better delivery and effectiveness of United Nations development assistance. Thus, coherence is not an end in itself. We are therefore convinced that what needs to be measured at the end of the pilots is not just the "how" of the Panel's recommendations but the

"how much". We need to know how much the United Nations agencies saved on their transaction costs, how much of their reporting burden was reduced and how much improvement was achieved in the delivery of development assistance to support the efforts of developing countries in pursuing their national development plans and priorities.

While measuring the development impact of improved coordination and coherence, it is also important that we measure the cost incurred to achieve that better performance. We have repeatedly asked for the expenditures incurred by United Nations funds and programmes on coordination. So far, we have learned that better coordination leads to long-term savings. We would like to see precise figures of coordination-related expenditures incurred by the funds and programmes over the years, including the expenditures on the resident coordinator system. The High-level Panel's report makes further recommendations for enhancing coordination or coherence. We would like to know how much that would cost the United Nations system before we consider the likely benefits that may emerge from these recommendations.

The Secretary-General has assured us that due consideration will be given to the High-level Panel's proposal to establish an independent task force to further eliminate duplication within the United Nations system and consolidate United Nations entities, where necessary, building on the foundations of the Panel's work. That exercise would seem to make the parallel process of mandates review, undertaken by Member States through an informal working group of the General Assembly, duplicative.

The details sought by us today, as well as those promised by the Secretary-General in his report, will enable us to carry out a cost-benefit analysis during intergovernmental discussions. The Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review had an optimal balance of the one and the many, creating synergy while preserving the energy inherent in each separate mandate. Coherence and "One United Nations" are not an end in themselves unless we believe with Shelley that "the One remains, the many change and pass". While stitching a new jacket, we should be careful that it does not become a straitjacket.

It would be a pity if the United Nations Development Programme were to lose its role in human development and development policy advice on cross-cutting development issues and become a mere coordinator and manager, with a diluted focus on development and poverty. Making human rights a conditionality and thus losing the substance of the right to development would be a poor bargain. The sustainable development board does not seem a sustainable concept; the supervisory role of the Member States and that of each executive board in respect of individual mandates of funds and programmes should not be compromised.

The resolution on strengthening the Economic and Social Council was adopted after the report of the High-level Panel was submitted. We need to first implement the strengthened mandates — especially the periodic review of international economic policies, which should include the policies of the Bretton Woods institutions — before considering alternatives. The most important event in the contemporary United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions is the event that has not happened at all — the reform of the Security Council and the reform of the Bretton Woods institutions themselves. In the shadow of that non-reform, which is the source of much fundamental incoherence, system-wide coherence may hardly touch the periphery of real change for the better. It is doubtful whether mere administrative and institutional reorganization can be substitutes for genuine institutional reform.

We hope that you, Madam, will lead the consultations that will decide about the kind of process that can be adopted to do justice to the consolidated intergovernmental consideration of the contents of the High-level Panel's report and the report of the Secretary-General on its recommendations.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.